



*Married
by Lucy*

Let's have some fun.

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Dear future Brides and Grooms,

Let's get you guys married in style.

As a wedding celebrant, it is not only my job to lead a mind-blowingly awesome ceremony, it is also my responsibility to be in charge of alllll the legal paperwork. Think of me as your wedding secretary. FUN.

Together, we can sit down (with wine, preferably. Everything is better with wine...) and plan every inch of your ceremony. Relaxed, amusing ceremonies are my specialty - I believe the best weddings have the right mix of romance and fun. Laughter with just the right amount of tears. That's what we're after.

There's a lot of information in here about civil ceremonies and what I have to offer - but all you have to know is that I've got your back. I'll tell you what I need from you and when, you just have to relax and look good on your big day.

Feel free to call me any time you want more information, or if you want to start making plans for your ceremony. Here's hoping we get to have fun at the end of the aisle together.

Love and champagne,

Lucy

A little about me...

Starting with my debut on stage at age three as a mosquito, I have always loved performing. With a degree in Musical Theatre (Bachelor of Arts at UBAA in 2010) and years of acting experience, I certainly feel comfortable in front of a crowd. I am also a writer, having worked as a freelance comedy/opinion writer for various online networks (Mamamia, News.com, The Glow, Aspire, iVillage) writing everything from viral articles supporting equal marriage, to love letters for Prince Harry.

After a special request from a friend in 2016, I became a Civil Marriage Celebrant through Rose Training Australia and began a wonderful journey that brings together my passion for people, writing, performing, and telling stories.

What is my role as a marriage celebrant?

As a celebrant, the legality of your marriage begins and ends with me. It's my job to make sure your marriage is signed, sealed and delivered, legally speaking – from the Notice of Intended Marriage to registering the marriage at Births, Deaths and Marriages.

Also, I will help you tailor the ceremony to what you want, with everything from vows, to poems, songs, and rituals. We can talk through my list of every type of wedding ceremony ritual to include the ones you do like, and laugh at the ones that you don't.

Paperwork, paperwork, paperwork.

Paperwork is the FUNNEST part of marriage. Okay, fine, it's not... but don't worry, it's my job to guide you and let you know what is happening and when. The first one to think about will be the Notice of Intended Marriage, or the NOIM. This needs to be lodged to your celebrant at least 1 month before your ceremony, and no more than 18 months before (check the date with me if you're unsure). I will talk you through the NOIM so we can get the ball rolling, including the documentation you are required to provide for it (just passport, OR birth certificate with drivers license, and proof of former marriage dissolution e.g divorce, nullity or death certificate). See? How fun is getting married?!

Ceremony Options

When it comes to civil wedding services, anything can happen. There is a wealth of traditions to choose from, it's just about choosing the ones that suit you. To be clear though - you don't have to include ANY of them, these are sort of like little cherries on the wedding pie. When we start planning your ceremony together, we can look at the rituals in greater details, but here is an example of rituals that you may like to include:

- A community vow of support, from the family and friends attending your wedding.
- A ritual to recognise the parents of both the bride and the groom, in manner of an acknowledgement, a vow, a blessing or a gift.
- A sand, candle or pebble ceremony (or similar) to represent anything from the bonds between families, to the beginning of the new journey being embarked upon.
- A blessing or warming of the rings, which can involve some or all of the wedding guests passing the rings around to instill them with their blessings.
- A handfasting ceremony, where the hands of the bride and the groom are bound together loosely with cord, ribbon or prayer beads, and words are spoken to symbolise the unity.
- Releasing doves or butterflies at the ceremony to represent the start of a new life.
- A ceremony involving any children of the bride or groom from previous relationships, which may take the form of a vow, a gift or an acknowledgement.
- Showering the bride and groom with bubbles or flower petals, to represent the showering of good wishes for their marriage... and to look great for photos!

The vows and the spoken words.

There are actually only three things that must be done at a civil ceremony for the wedding to be legal, and they aren't long. The Monitum (legal statement) must be said by the celebrant, the minimum wording of vows must be said by the couple, and the register must be signed by the couple, the celebrant, and the witnesses. That's it! You can be married in sixty seconds if you want to be! Everything else, from the kiss, to the exchanging of rings, to saying 'I do', is open to interpretation. Below is what must be said, including a few optional (but limited) changes.

The Maritum.

This must be spoken by the celebrant in front of the couple and the two witnesses. The words in brackets are the optional changes, but no other changes can be made.

"I am duly authorised by law (or 'legally registered', or 'the registered marriage celebrant authorised') to solemnise marriages according to law. Before you are joined in marriage in my presence and in the presence of these witnesses, I am to remind you of the solemn (or 'serious' or 'formal') and binding (or 'permanent') nature (or 'promise') of the relationship into which you are now about to enter (or 'formalising' or 'sealing' or 'binding'). Marriage, according to law in Australia, is the union of two people to the exclusion of all others, voluntarily entered into for life."

The minimum wording.

The other phrase that must be said is the minimum wording, which must be spoken by the Bride and Groom. They are as follows (with permitted changes in brackets).

"I call upon (or 'ask') the persons (or 'people') here present to witness that I, (name of Person 1) take thee (or 'you') (name of Person 2) to be my lawful wedded (wife/husband/spouse)."

You can add in your own personalised vows around the minimum wording, so long as it doesn't contradict anything in the statement. I can assist you as much as you need in developing your own vows - it's a big part of my job. Many couples also opt for an 'asking' section, where the celebrant does a call-and-response such as 'Do you take this man to be your husband, to love and to cherish...' with the response being 'I do'. I like to mix these traditional vows with more personal/sentimental ones from you guys. When we get down to planning, we will ensure you feel comfortable with everything planned for your ceremony.

Signing the register.

This part is easy. During the ceremony we take a moment to sign the wedding register/marriage certificates. The couple, their two chosen witnesses and the celebrant must sign three documents so that everything is official. I will talk you through these documents beforehand, and then once we all sign them on the day, you are officially hitched!

Remember: civil ceremonies are completely flexible. The legal part only takes about a minute, so the rest of it is up to us to create! Fun, romantic, and memorable. I got your back, guys. Let's do this.

Timeline.

Here's an estimate of what meetings we will have, and what details I will require from you. Please note - this does not include an initial meeting, which is our chance to meet each other so you can make a decision.

- 6-8 weeks before wedding (no later than 1 month before wedding):

Paperwork and planning meeting (only need passport OR drivers license+birth certificate, and if previously married, divorce/nullity/death certificate). Usually at this meeting, we will sign the NOIM and then we'll have a good ol' chat about everything you do or don't want in the ceremony.

- 2 weeks before wedding:

Make sure you are collating vows, readings, and the answers to the questionnaire I use to build the ceremony. Sending me all of this material means that I can put together your ceremony in time for the rehearsal.

- Week of wedding:

Wedding rehearsal. I highly recommend them - they are very casual, and quite fun, and they don't even have to take place at the venue. We can do it a pub, your house, a park, anywhere. It's about stepping through the entries and exits, practicing timing (especially of the music, if you are using a phone/ipod to play from) and talking everything through. We won't run through the whole ceremony, only the outline of it. It's good for calming nerves, but most of all -we have a document (Declaration of No Legal Impediment to Marriage) that must be signed BEFORE the ceremony, so the rehearsal is the best time!

- Day of wedding:

I'll arrive approx 45-60 minutes before the ceremony, and leave quietly within about 30 minutes after the end of it. Everything in between we will plan the s**t out of! I'll also be earlier if we need to action any wet weather plans.

- After wedding:

On the first weekday after your ceremony, I'll lodge your paperwork with Births, Deaths and Marriages. I'll be in touch with you for a debrief, and to explain how to go about the name-changing process, obtaining a marriage certificate, etc.

Between now and the lead-up to your wedding, you can contact me any time with ideas, concerns, or if you just want a chat!

Technology.

I don't mean to brag (okay, yes I do) but I've got an amaaaazing PA system. It's a portable, wireless, battery-operated Mipro system with a cordless microphone, CD-rom, USB, AUX and bluetooth capabilities to play music from phones/ipods etc. You see? Worth bragging about. If you have a videographer who needs to record sound, they can plug directly into the back of my speaker.

Use of my PA system for the duration of the ceremony is included in my price, so if we need it, we'll use it. I will have it charged and ready to go, and do everything in my power to ensure that your ceremony is heard clearly by all of your guests.

After our planning meeting, I will also give you a login to use a secret, fancy part of my website, which has various resources, readings, vow templates, and most importantly, a questionnaire that'll help me to build your ceremony. But more on that when we meet up.

Marriage Equality.

Hooray for Marriage Equality in Australia! As of Dec 9th 2017, same-sex marriage is legal in Australia. For celebrants, this has had little impact on the logistics of a ceremony, except for two important things: Firstly, the language of the paperwork and the Monitum (which is explained Page 5) has been updated to include same-sex marriages. Secondly, we get the opportunity to marry all deserving couples. As a firm ally, I was thrilled for this change to Australian law.

Relationship education.

As a celebrant, I am required to recommend you get pre-marriage counselling - but it's not as weird as you might think. Pre-marriage counselling is not for relationships in trouble. On the contrary, it is a great way to strengthen your union and learn some important tools for marriage. Most couples who participate in it find it significantly interesting and rewarding, and it is a great start to a healthy marriage. Here are a few providers around Melbourne:

Relationships Victoria provide a pre-marriage course called 'Prepare', with a special course for couples with children called 'Prepare - MC'. They offer three private, one-hour sessions, face-to-face with a professional RAV counsellor, with an option to arrange the sessions to be held over skype or phone conference if attendance is not possible. At \$300 for the three sessions, the course will assist any couple looking to be married or make a formal commitment. They have locations around Victoria, in Boronia, Cranbourne, Greensborough, Kew, Sunshine, Shepparton, Ballarat, Traralgon, and Melbourne. Website: www.relationshipsvictoria.com.au

Relationship education cont.

The Hart Centre offers two one-hour sessions for couples looking to get married. Beginning with a comprehensive questionnaire sent via email, the sessions look to comfortably resolve any issues before getting married, in a private session with a psychologist. The cost is \$320 (with an Easy Payment Plan of \$160 per session x 2). (After hours or CBD location \$175 per session) Private Health Insurance Rebates apply, and Medicare Rebates may apply. The Hart Centre has an option for Skype or phone sessions, and has eighteen locations around Melbourne and the outer suburbs. Website: www.thehartcentre.com.au

If you'd prefer to try group counselling, LifeWorks offers group session for couples looking to make a life-long commitment. The 1 day group session (usually with 3-5 couples) goes for five hours, and is priced from \$250-\$300 for the day, and is a fun and interactive environment. LifeWorks also offers private counselling for \$325 for an initial consultation. With seven branches around Melbourne and Victoria, they are easily accessible, and meet a range of counselling needs. Website: www.lifeworks.com.au

A 'low-budget' option for couples who may not be able to afford other services. Though affiliated with St Michael's Uniting Church, they do not promote religion in their services. Their fees are \$30 for an intake interview and \$20 for subsequent sessions, at 50 minutes per session. Their office hours are 9-5 Mon-Fri, and they usually do not have a waiting list, so appointments are readily available. Located at 120 Collins Street, Melbourne. Website: www.mingarycounselling.com.au

A smaller chain of psychology offices in NSW and Victoria, with five offices in Victoria. Reflection Psychology offer couples counselling without a specific 'pre-marriage' course, but tailored to the couples needs. Rates are \$190 p/h during business hours (8 am - 4pm). Website: www.reflectionpsychology.com.au

CityLife are a community support group in Wantirna South. CityLife's pre-marriage course is 3 sessions, with either one or two couples counsellors. The price is \$300 (for all three sessions) and an online questionnaire is conducted separately before the services begin. They do have financial support available for couples who should need it. Website: www.citylife.care

Call me, maybe?

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